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HC

APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.
09/356,327	07/16/99	WONG	C 032151-013

021839 LM02/0216
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EXAMINER

ALVAREZ, R

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2761

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DATE MAILED:

02/16/00

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Commissioner of Patents and Trademarks

Office Action Summary

Application No.
09/356,327

Applicant(s)
Charles Wong

Examiner
RAQUEL ALVAREZ

Group Art Unit
2761



☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on Jul 16, 1999

☐ This action is **FINAL**.

☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11; 453 O.G. 213.

A shortened statutory period for response to this action is set to expire three month(s), or thirty days, whichever is longer, from the mailing date of this communication. Failure to respond within the period for response will cause the application to become abandoned. (35 U.S.C. § 133). Extensions of time may be obtained under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a).

Disposition of Claims

☒ Claim(s) 82-118 is/are pending in the application.

Of the above, claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

☒ Claim(s) 107, 108, and 114-118 is/are allowed.

☒ Claim(s) 82-96, 98-106, and 109-113 is/are rejected.

☒ Claim(s) 97 is/are objected to.

☐ Claims _____ are subject to restriction or election requirement.

Application Papers

☒ See the attached Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948.

☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are objected to by the Examiner.

☐ The proposed drawing correction, filed on _____ is ☐ approved ☐ disapproved.

☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d).

☐ All ☐ Some* ☐ None of the CERTIFIED copies of the priority documents have been
☐ received.

☐ received in Application No. (Series Code/Serial Number) _____.

☐ received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

*Certified copies not received: _____.

☐ Acknowledgement is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e).

Attachment(s)

☒ Notice of References Cited, PTO-892

☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s), PTO-1449, Paper No(s). _____

☐ Interview Summary, PTO-413

☒ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review, PTO-948

☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application, PTO-152

--- SEE OFFICE ACTION ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES ---

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DETAILED ACTION

1. Claims 82-118 are presented for examination.

Specification

2. Applicant is reminded of the proper language and format for an abstract of the disclosure.

The abstract should be in narrative form and generally limited to a single paragraph on a separate sheet within the range of 50 to 250 words. It is important that the abstract not exceed 250 words in length since the space provided for the abstract on the computer tape used by the printer is limited. The form and legal phraseology often used in patent claims, such as "means" and "said," should be avoided. The abstract should describe the disclosure sufficiently to assist readers in deciding whether there is a need for consulting the full patent text for details.

The language should be clear and concise and should not repeat information given in the title. It should avoid using phrases which can be implied, such as, "The disclosure concerns," "The disclosure defined by this invention," "The disclosure describes," etc.

3. The specification is objected to because on page 22, line 10 says "in figure 7" where figure 7 is actually figures 7A-7C. The specification must coincide with the labeled figures of the drawings. Correction is required. See MPEP § 608.01(b).
4. The microfiche appendix is missing.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 112

In claim 82, it is unclear if a method or system is claimed.

Claims 83-85, 87-90 are unclear as to which claim or claims they depend from. For purpose of examination, claims 83-85, 87-90 depend from claim 82.

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Claim 87 is unclear as to which claim it depends from. For purpose of examination, claim 87 depends from claim 86.

Claims 92-94 are unclear as to which claim or claims they depend from. For purpose of examination, claims 92-94 depend from claim 91.

Claims 96-99 are unclear as to which claim or claims they depend from. For purpose of examination, claims 96-99 depend from claim 95.

Claims 101-106 are unclear as to which claim or claims they depend from. For purpose of examination, claims 101-106 depend from claim 100.

Claim 108 is unclear as to which claim it depends from. For purpose of examination claim 108 depend from claim 107.

Claims 111-112 are unclear as to which claim or claims they depend from. For purpose of examination claims 111-112 depend from claim 110.

Claim 118 is unclear as to which claim it depends from. For purpose of examination, claim 118 depends from claim 117.

In claim 89, line 1 there is no antecedent basis for "the changes".

In claim 93, line 1 there is no antecedent basis for "the product collections".

In claim 94, line 1 there is no antecedent basis for "the product collections".

In claim 97, lines 1-2 it recites "at least some customer-service/return records" it is unclear if the "customer service/return records" is the same customer service/return record of claim 95 or is it a different customer service/return record.

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In claim 99, lines 1-2 it recites "customer service/return record" it is unclear if the "customer service/return records" is the same customer service/return record of claim 95 or is it a different customer service/return record.

In claim 103, line 1 it recites "a workflow unit" it is unclear if the workflow unit is the same work flow unit as the one of claim 100 or is it a different workflow unit.

In claim 107, line 7 there is no antecedent basis for "the categorized items".

In claim 109, line 5 there is no antecedent basis for "the request".

In claim 115, line 1-2 there is no antecedent basis for "the same virtual department".

In claim 118, line 1-2 it recites "an item record" it is unclear if the item record is the same item record as claim 117, lines 7-8 or is it a different item record.

Correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

5. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

6. Claims 82-96 and 98-106 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sellers et al. (5,311,438 hereinafter Sellers).

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With respect to claim 109, Seller teaches a method of handling customer requests(col. 70, lines 30-, col. 76, lines 1-26). Receiving a post-sale customer request related to a previously-sold item(col. 74, lines 59-66).

With respect to evaluating the request based on customer-specific criteria, including criteria set by at least one business partner, and historical data; and if applicable criteria are met, automatically approving the request. Seller teaches that returns are to be approved based on certain characteristics and based on the historical receipts(col. 74, lines 67- col. 75 lines 1-10) if the applicable criteria are met, automatically approving the request(col. 75, lines 11-18). Sellers does not specifically teach that the criteria are set by at least one business partner. Official notice is taken that is old and well known in a joint business agreement to have the business partners make day-to-day management of the partnership's activities. It would therefore have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included in the system of Seller setting and evaluating the request based on at least one business partner because such a modification would allow the partners to play an active role on the day-to-day management of the partnership's activities.

With respect to claim 110, Seller teaches a method of satisfying demand (col. 72, lines 16-28). Receiving demand information from multiple sources (i.e. the returns are received from various customers)(col. 72, lines 17-28); retaining a distinct record of individual demand information received from each of the multiple different sources(col. 72, lines 17-25); performing

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a processing step using the individual demand information(col. 72, lines 17-28). Sellers does not specifically teach grouping the demand information and performing another step using the grouped demand information. Official notice is taken that is old and well known in the marketing industry to group demand information on customers such as what coupons a particular group of people are redeeming which the marketers will use to targeted a group of people. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included grouping the demand information and processing using the grouped demand information to better serve a group of people's demand.

Claim 111 further recites propagating demand information to at least one of customers and suppliers, including applying a classification scheme whereby items are classified, marked and displayed according to classification. Official notice is taken that is old and well known for toy makers as well as automobiles makers to classify and mark certain items for recall based on a certain classification. It would therefore have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included propagating demand information to at least one customer and supplier based on the item's classification because such a modification would extend the warranty on certain item when necessary.

With respect to claim 112, Sellers further teaches that the demand information includes demand information from the customer(col. 72, lines 17-28).

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7. Claims 82-96 and 98-106 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sellers et al. (5,311,438 hereinafter Sellers) in view of Cupps et al.(5,991,739 hereinafter Cupps).

With respect to claim 82, Sellers teaches an automated business-to-business electronic commerce system (col. 70, lines 30-37). A user during a first session selecting at least a first product(i.e. the user enters the specification of the items to be purchased, the maximum and minimum quantities amounts and the value of the order(col. 70, lines 48-52); the system storing identification of said first within a first product collection(i.e. the system maintains an item(product) specific number(identification))(col. 70, lines 48-52).

With respect to the user during a subsequent session causing the first product collection to be retrieved. Since in the system of Seller, the product information is maintained to allow the user to place orders when needed(col. 70, lines 35-36) then it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have retrieved the product collection on subsequent sessions to allow the user to view and place the orders of already selected products because such a modification would reduce the time consumed in the ordering process.

Seller does not specifically teach that the system is implemented on the web. On the other hand, Cupps teaches an Internet online order method and apparatus. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included

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implementing the system of Seller on the web because such a modification would allow more user to benefit from the system.

Claim 83 further recites that the product collection is caused to be retrieved using a flexible identification procedure. In the system of Seller, the product information(such as an identification) is maintained to allow the user to place orders when needed(col. 70, lines 35-36). Sellers does not specifically teach that the identification of the product collection is a flexible identification procedure. Official notice is taken that is old and well known to use a flexible identification procedure because such modification would the identification procedure to adapt to new or different changing requirements.

With respect to claim 84, Seller further teaches adding an item to the first product collection(col. 71, lines 23-27).

Claim 85 further recites changing at least the quantity and price of a duplicated item. Official notice is taken that is old and well known when re-ordering previously ordered item to access a database with those records by changing the cost, quantity and term it would save the user time by not having to re-enter the item's specifications.

With respect to claim 86, Sellers further teaches classifying product collections into multiple categories according to use(i.e. each item is linked to one mere sets of characteristics(categories). The specifications(categories)may include performance characteristics(use) of the particular item)(col. 3, lines 19-26).

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With respect to claims 87 and 88, official notice is taken that is old and well known to use a product collection as a customized catalog because such a modification would allow the user to save time by just ordering from previously ordered items which already have the users preferences.

With respect to claim 89, Sellers further recite that changes made by the use are immediately affectuated(col. 71, lines 23-47).

With respect to claim 90, official notice is taken that is old and well known to create a second product collection from a first product collection because such a modification would allow the user to save time by incorporating items previously purchased or ordered to a subsequent session if the same items are to be re-ordered.

With respect to claim 91, Sellers teaches a business-to-business commerce system(col. 70, lines 30-37). Creating within the database item collections, each item being a potential subject of a business transaction(i.e. within a database item collections(specifications) are created, each item being a potential subject of an order process)(col. 3, lines 19-26);

With respect to users creating new items collections at least partially derived from an existing item collections, producing a multiplicity of item collections related by derivation. Since, Sellers teaches that multiple item collections(specifications) are created then the it would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included the item collections being related by derivation because such a modification would save

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time by allowing the newly item collection to maintain the same characteristic as the item collections that is derived from.

Seller does not specifically teach that the system is implemented on the web. On the other hand, Cupps teaches an Internet online order method and apparatus. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included implementing the system of Seller on the web because such a modification would allow more user to benefit from the system.

With respect to claim 92, Sellers further recite applying different classifications to different product collections(col. 3, lines 19-26).

With respect to claim 93, Sellers further teaches that the product collections include quotes(col. 70, lines 30-68).

Claim 94 further recites that the product collections include master worksheets. Official notice is taken that is old and well known to use a worksheet which can contain formulas so that if one number is changed, the entire worksheet is automatically updated, based on those formulas. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included in the product collections of Sellers a master worksheet because such a modification would allow the user to save time by automatically updated the entire collection when a change occurs.

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With respect to claim 95, Seller teaches a method of processing customer service requests relating to a product, including returns (col. 71, lines 35-47) and the user causing a record to be created in the database(col. 71, lines 34-47).

With respect to claim 96, Sellers further teaches that the customer-service/return record created is related to a pre-existing database record(i.e. out of the pre-existing database record of the item purchased, a return record is created when the customer returns any of those items)(col 71, lines 35-47).

Claim 98 further recites wherein the customer-service/return record is categorized in accordance with types including multiples ones of the following types: under warranty part not required, under warranty part required, lost or damage, etc. Seller teaches creating and maintaining and describing the reason of the return such as lost or damage items(col. 71, lines 40-44). It would therefore have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included categories of why the item was returned because such a modification would provide faster, easier access, search and retrieval of the return items and its cause.

Claim 99 further recites including hierarchically related customer service/return record types. Official notice is taken that is old and well known to organize items in a logical ascending or descending series, as by order of importance. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included dividing the

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service/return type in a hierarchically order because such a modification would provide a faster, easier access, search and retrieval of the return items in order of importance.

With respect to claims 100-104 and 106, Sellers teaches a business-to-business electronic commerce system(col. 70, lines 30-37). Obtaining from multiple parties demand information specifying an item to be subject of a transaction (i.e. the system obtains from different vendors items that can be ordered)(col. 70, lines 30-40).

Claim 105 further recites that the information is obtained via the web server. Cupps teaches an Internet online order method and apparatus. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time of Applicant's invention to have included obtaining the information via the web because such a modification would allow more user to benefit from the system.

With respect to organizing transaction information into self-contained workflow units having a predetermined format and each including demand information for a particular party, the predetermined format defining a command demand document enabling demand information to be capsuled for a range of differentiated business transactions of different complexity. Sellers teaches that the transactions have a predetermined format and each including demand information for a particular party (i.e. based on the agreement with the individual vendor, the transaction information includes demand information depending on the different business transaction of different complexity, each transaction having a different predetermined format based on the contract that the user has with each vendor)(col. 70, lines 30-, col. 71, lines 1-47). Sellers does

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not specifically teach organizing the information into self-contained workflow units. Official notice is taken that is old and well known to organize the information into workflow units because such a modification would speed up the processing time of the transaction information.

8. Claim 113 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sitarski(5,237,497 hereinafter Sitarski).

With respect to claim 113, Sitarski teaches storing within a database, in accordance with a single database schema, all current records required to perform a full spectrum of business functions throughout a life cycle of each product item(col. 5, lines 59- col. 6, lines 1-17); and limiting a number of persons for which current records are stored within the database(col. 5, lines 33-40). Sitarski does not specifically teach that the limitation is on the business partners. Nevertheless, official notice is taken that is old and well known to have limited partners wherein they are not involved in management decisions. It would have been obvious to a person of ordinary skill at the time of Applicant's invention to have included limiting a number of business partners for which current records are stored in the database because such a modification would detail the rights and the responsibilities of the business partners.

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Allowable Subject Matter

9. Claim 97 is objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

With respect to claim 97, the Examiner asserts that for at least some customer-service/return records, the automated workflow process reverses a previously executed workflow process, in combination with the other limitations of the claim is not taught in the prior art of record.

10. Claims 107-108, 114-115 and 116-118 are allowed.

With respect to claims 107-108, the Examiner asserts that applying an algorithm whereby items are classified, marked and displayed according to classification for performing a particular business function, in addition to the other limitation of the claims is not taught in the prior art of record.

With respect to claims 114-115, the Examiner asserts that establishing an end-to-end business commerce in which product items are sold, using a web-enabled relational database management system running on a server platform by providing within a single database automated system data and methods spanning multiple business functions, the data being stored in accordance with a single database schema; providing a user interface that allows open navigation by a user between information pertaining to different business domains, and, for each of multiple business functions, displaying within an integrated decision making environment complete

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information required to perform that business function; and dynamically defining multiple virtual business departments by, for each of multiple groups of people, assigning substantially similar access privileges to each person within the group, wherein the access privileges of different groups are substantially different in combination with the other limitation of the claim, is not taught in the prior art of record.

With respect to claim 116, the Examiner asserts that identifying multiple modules of the software; and via web administration, producing a software configuration in which selected ones of the modules are enabled or disabled; wherein the software producing a workscope/workflow are structured display pf complex database records each comprising multiple lines of text and pertaining to both a first party to a business transaction and a second party to the business transaction, the structured display constituting an integrated decision-making environment for a particular business function, in addition to the other limitations of the claim is not taught in the prior art of record.

With respect to claims 117-118, the Examiner asserts that a server platform running a web-enabled relational database management system; stored in the database, an item table comprising item records, each item record containing business domain-specific fields pertaining to a plurality of the following business domains: products, payments, performance and personnel; whereby, once item information has been input and committed, it is immediately available for viewing by a multiplicity of information workers, different information workers having

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responsibility for different ones of said domains, in combination with the other limitations of the claim is not taught in the prior art of record.

Points Of Contact

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Raquel Alvarez whose telephone number is (703) 305-0456. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday to Friday from 9:00 to 5:30.

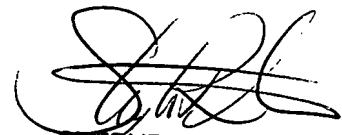
If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Todd Voeltz, can be reached on (703) 305-9714. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is (703) 305-0040.

Any inquiry of a general nature or relating to the status of this application or proceeding should be directed to the receptionist whose telephone number is (703) 305-3900.

R. A.

Raquel Alvarez
Patent Examiner, AU 2761

February 11, 2000


STEPHEN R. TKACS
PRIMARY EXAMINER